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# EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR LIBERIAN DEVELOPMENT

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Since 2011, the Excellence in Higher Education for Liberian Development (EHELD) project has worked with Liberia's leading universities to transform the higher education fields of engineering and agriculture to be more dynamic, interactive, and modern so that students have practical skills and are ready to enter the workforce upon graduation. EHELD has developed premiere Centers of Excellence in engineering at the University of Liberia and agriculture at Cuttington University's College of Agriculture and Sustainable Development, which are equipping students to be leaders and managers in these fields and drive Liberia's economic growth. EHELD also facilitates linkages between Liberia's employers and higher education institutions in these fields to ensure that students are equipped with skills relevant to employers in Liberia.

## Current Activities

- Under the STEM Start program, EHELD is helping secondary school students develop skills in Science, Technology, English and Math so that they are better prepared to both enter and succeed in their engineering and agricultural studies at the University of Liberia and Cuttington University.
- Employ a mix of tools (international exchange programs, scholarships for post-graduate degrees, and short courses) to build the skills of faculty and administrators at the universities so that they are better equipped to teach on the revised curriculum as well as drive and sustain the centers of excellence after the life of EHELD.
- Engage and link the private sector to the universities through the Liberian Employers Action Group (LEAG) in order to create internships that will afford students with hands-on learning opportunities, facilitating job placement upon graduation.

## Accomplishments To Date

- Developed a new and revised engineering and agriculture curricula that reflects the input of Liberia's employers.
- Awarded nearly 300 academic-year scholarships to deserving Liberian undergraduates, allowing them to continue their studies in engineering and agriculture.
- In 2014, 53 scholarship students graduated from the College of Agriculture and Sustainable Development.
- Attracted thousands of Liberian students to engineering and agriculture, and prepared them for study in these fields, by reaching out to them through innovated EHED pipeline programs such as Summer Start, Smart Start, and Fast Start.
- Awarded 18 scholarships to Liberian faculty, allowing them to pursue higher education degrees abroad that will improve their teaching and mentoring capabilities.
- Facilitated 14 short courses and placed international visiting faculty at both universities in order to bolster faculty and administrator skills.
- Created internship and student career centers at each Center of Excellence to guide students and better prepare them for the workforce.
- Made significant improvements to the facilities at the universities: new computer, science, and outdoor laboratories (including a student farm); provided internet; renovated classrooms; thousands of textbooks.

## Planned Outcomes

- Increased number of students (particularly girls) attracted to the fields of engineering and agriculture, with the math, science and English skills required to gain admission and be successful.
- Increased academic success of engineering and agricultural students with practical skills that will prepare them for the workforce in areas relevant to Liberia's employers.
- Improved teaching, mentoring and leaderships skills of Liberian faculty and administrators so that they are better equipped to manage and sustain the Centers of Excellence and ensure long-term success.
- More qualified, capable and motivated Liberians within the agriculture and engineering fields to help contribute to Liberia's economic growth.